

# S E R M O N

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## FUNERAL

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SAMUEL ABBOT, ESQUIRE,

One of the FOUNDERS of the THEOLOGICAL SEMINARY

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## SERMON.

Heb. vi, 12.

THAT YE BE NOT SLOTHFUL, BUT FOLLOWERS OF THEM,  
WHO THROUGH FAITH AND PATIENCE INHERIT THE  
PROMISES.

In this passage, the apostle directed the thoughts of the Hebrews to Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob, and other saints, who through faith in the promises and patient expectation of their accomplishment, and through meekness and fortitude under the various sufferings of life, had gotten beyond the reach of trouble and danger, and were in possession of the heavenly inheritance. He directed their thoughts to those ancient believers, not to excite their admiration, nor to gratify their curiosity, but to *rouse them to diligent imitation.*

It is *our* duty, Brethren, as it was the duty of the Hebrews, to *imitate the example of believers.*

By inculcating this duty, I would by no means intimate that the character of believers, even those most distinguished for holiness, is to be regarded, as the standard of religion. The same inspired volume, which exhorts us to imitate the saints, guards us against considering them, as *perfect* patterns, by pointing out their various defects. The best christians on earth must not be set up as infallible guides;—they must not occupy the place of Jesus Christ. The holy Apostle could say

no more than,—“Be ye followers of me, even *as* I am of Christ.”

The FIRST consideration I shall urge, to enforce the duty of following the saints, is *the excellence of their example*. They all have the spirit of Christ, and walk in his steps. They are clothed with humility. The love of God is the governing affection of their hearts, and shows itself by uniform obedience. The law of God is the rule of their actions. Regulated by this, they bear fruit to his praise. Their religion does not consist in bare profession or ostentatious zeal, but in a *good life*;—a life of sincere piety towards God, and benevolence to men. Such, in a measure, is the life of all Christians. A *Christian* without the spirit of *Christ*,—a *good man* without a good life, is as palpable an absurdity, as the imagination can invent. If christians had nothing but profession;—if, with all the respect which they occasionally show for religion, they were as covetous, as selfish, as false, as revengeful, and as useless to the church of Christ, as men of the world are; their example would mislead and destroy. But, with all their lamented imperfections, they are the excellent of the earth. By the Spirit of God they are renewed to holiness; and are comely through the comeliness, which divine grace has put upon them. It is our duty to imitate them in every thing that is excellent and praiseworthy. We should imitate the faith, by which they confide in the infallible truth of the word of God; by which, especially, they receive Christ, as he is offered in the gospel. We should imitate their humility, by which they are brought to take their place at the feet of Jesus, and to prefer others to themselves. We should imitate their supreme love to God and their active benevolence to men, by which they comply with

the spirit of the moral law. We should imitate their patience in affliction, their forgiveness of injuries, their love of Zion, their zeal to do good, their spiritual mindedness, and their habitual devotion. Whatsoever things are pure, whatsoever things are excellent, whatsoever things are lovely in them, we ought diligently to copy.

It is hardly necessary to remark, that *good example* more clearly shows the beauty and utility of holiness, and is much better calculated to make a deep impression, than *mere precept*. This is true of the display of holiness in the example of every intelligent being, of whatever rank. But the example of believers has *peculiar* advantages. It is the example of human beings,—beings possessed of the same nature, and subject to the same trials with us. Are we possessed of a nature weak and depraved, and exposed to temptations, difficulties, and discouragements from without and within? So were all the saints, whose names are recorded in the Scriptures, and all others, of whom we have any knowledge. Nay, in most instances, the difficulties they had to encounter were far greater, than those, which exist at the present day. Their example then clearly shows that religion is attainable; that duty may be practised; that all the excellent virtues, which their life displayed, may be displayed in ours. Such is the example of the saints generally. They are lights in the world, and do much towards dissipating the darkness which over-spreads the earth.

But the good influence of their example is much increased when they live in our own times,—in our own country,—in our own circle;—and above all, if we have a personal acquaintance with them. When they are placed so near us, we attain clearer and more affect-

ing views of their character. True, we see more of their *failings*. But we also see more of their *virtues*; and we see them in their own proper light. The moral features of those, who are distant from us, are very liable to be misrepresented, and misunderstood. Suppose you paint the character of a christian of a distant age or place. You set it off with all the glowing colors which the imagination can give it. It is a *finished character*. But it is the character of no christian on earth. Nor is it the character of any saint or angel in heaven; for no painter can give an exact portrait of one, whom he never saw. What is it then? Whom does it resemble?—No one. It is a false picture. It is an imagination, a dream. And the impression will be as slight, as the image is airy.—But when we fix our eyes upon a follower of Christ, who is near us, and with whom we are personally acquainted; we are brought back to *realities*. We see what has existence. We see a character, which the grace of God has formed. We discern its features exactly. We want no picture; for we have the original before us. The beauties we behold are *true and substantial*; and unless some great fault in our own minds prevent, the sight of them will contribute to our lasting improvement.

The example of believers is attended with greater advantages still, if, besides acquaintance with them in the common intercourse of life, *we have known their more private views, trials, and enjoyments*. In these ways, we come to an exact discernment of their character. We learn the secret springs of all their actions. They show us the inmost heart. They show us something of that spiritual life, which is hid with Christ in God. We see the faithfulness of their conscience, the tenderness of their heart, and their struggles with temptation.

We hear their groans under the burden and pollution of remaining sin. We hear their sighs after deliverance from the body of spiritual death, and after the perfect enjoyment of God.

How impressive does their example become, if we have access to them on the bed of *languishing*.—Have you been conversant with a good man, when finishing his course,—when near his Father's house,—his everlasting home? Have you seen him at the threshold of heaven? Have you seen in him that faith, which overcometh the world and the king of terrors? Have you witnessed his humble hope,—his panting after God,—his meekness and patience,—his hatred of sin,—his love of the saints,—his forgiveness of enemies,—his steady and earnest desire for the prosperity of the church, and his compassion for the world? Have you witnessed his entire submission to the will of God, and that tranquility, which bodily weakness and distress, and the certain prospect of speedy dissolution could not disturb? Have you seen celestial joy kindle in his soul at the thought of arriving at his journey's end, and being forever with the Lord?—You must then be convinced of the reality and excellence of his religion, and deeply feel the influence of his example. The death bed of the saint is not a place of delusion. There, the dreams and visions of the world vanish, and things appear what they are. Subtil infidels may dispute, and the profane world point the finger of scorn; but, if you have witnessed the last end of a good man, you have evidence of the solid foundation of his hope, which must be forever conclusive, and a motive, which nothing but hardness of heart can resist, to follow his steps.

But, in many instances, the example of a good man becomes in *the highest degree affecting*, in consequence of *his decease*. We have many years enjoyed his intimate friendship, and seen and felt the effects of his piety. We have also known his trials and comforts, both in health and sickness, and the hopes and joys, which sustained him in the hour of death.—He sleeps in Jesus; and we shall see his face no more.—*Now* his example is more impressive than ever. We are roused to attend to it. It becomes associated with all the tender recollections excited by his departure. We remember, with new sensations, the loveliness of his temper, his edifying conversation, and useful deeds. Every excellence of his character is noticed with more lively feelings. Many things, little regarded and soon forgotten amidst the business and pleasures of life, are now recalled. The sorrowful scene has brought us to a solemn pause, and occasioned the most interesting contemplations. We fix our thoughts upon the whole character and life of the departed christian, and view it in a more consistent and affecting light, than ever before. At the same time the influence of his example is increased and rendered more beneficial, by our thinking *what* and *where* he now is, and what will be his condition through everlasting ages.

But we must not omit the particular consideration suggested in the text.—“Be followers of them, who through faith and patience *inherit the promises*.”—They were not afraid to engage in the christian warfare, nor discouraged from persevering. They fought a good fight, and overcame all their enemies. Many were the difficulties and dangers they met in their way; but they finished their course. Their exertions were successful. The path, which they travelled, led them to a

peaceful death, and a happy immortality. In the promises of God they firmly trusted; and now, far from a state of insensibility, of darkness, and dreams, they inherit the promised good. Christ has said, “To him that overcometh will I grant to sit with me on my throne.” The fulfilment of this promise they now experience. They have obtained the end of their faith, the salvation of their souls. Shall we not imitate a life, which has terminated thus happily? Shall we not enlist in a cause, which has never miscarried? Shall we not pursue a course, which has always led to glory? If the departed saints had found their labors in vain, and had, after all, fallen short of the heavenly rest; we might be discouraged. But what more animating motive can stimulate us to follow their steps, than the unfailing success of their labors, the blessed issue of their trials, and the glorious victory which has crowned their warfare?

In our feelings toward christian friends, especially those who have entered into rest, are we not chargeable with a great fault?—We may have respected their character, been delighted with their conversation, applauded their benevolence, and been affected with momentary grief at their death.—But is this all we owe them? And is this all we owe the grace of God on their account? Far from it.—When we contemplate their amiable and pious character, ardent love should be kindled in our hearts. We ought to admire the power and glory of divine grace in creating them anew in Christ Jesus unto good works, and preparing them for the heavenly inheritance. Their goodness should make a deep and permanent impression upon us.—And what is more, WE SHOULD DILIGENTLY FOLLOW THEIR STEPS. Every other proof of affection is nothing,

without this. If we *truly love* the saints, we shall imitate their example, and labor to promote their benevolent designs. The precious cause of Christ, which was so dear to their hearts, will be dear to ours. All their pious wishes we shall endeavor to carry into effect. To think, *this was the desire of such a dear saint, now in heaven*, will be a powerful spring to our exertions. I repeat the sentiment, that *careful compliance with the pious wishes of departed christians, and imitation of their holy example, is the best proof, and the only real proof of sincere affection for them.*—God grant, that we may all give this proof of our cordial esteem and love of THE DEAR FRIEND, whose lifeless body is now before us.

To the duty of copying his example I would now, my hearers, most earnestly exhort you. When I point out the excellencies of his character, I shall speak the truth without coloring. May all the honor, which we give to the memory of this dear christian, ultimately redound to God, by whose power he was created; by whose gracious Spirit, he was, as we trust, renewed, and guided, and trained up for glory. That there has been *such a man* among us, will, we doubt not, be to the praise of the glory of God forever.

The first thing in his character, which I shall mention, as deserving imitation, was *habitual devotion*. On this and all other parts of his character, I shall speak according to the manifestation, which was made by his life, and not with any pretence of knowing the heart. From his fruits we have pleasing evidence, that he was sincerely and unreservedly devoted to God, saying, with the devout king of Israel, "Lord, I am thine."—How are we to come to the conclusion, that a man loves

God supremely, and is devoted to his honor? Is it evidence of this that he loves the house of God?—that he loves the saints?—that he loves the Holy Scriptures? Is delight in religious contemplation and prayer,—*is a conscientious observance of the commands of God* evidence of supreme love?—All this evidence appeared in our departed friend.

His devotion had no flights, and usually no raptures. But it had the characters of humility, of seriousness and tenderness, of constancy, and not unfrequently of earnestness. *He walked with God.*

*His attention to duty was universal.* He did not think of atoning for the neglect of the duties he owed to mankind, by multiplying his religious performances. Nor did he think of atoning for the neglect of religion, by punctuality in social duties. He had respect to all the divine precepts, and hated every false and sinful way.—Where can the man be found, who is *more afraid of doing wrong?*

He was remarkable for *sincerity and uprightness*. The sin of flattery he abhorred. One of his maxims was, "to praise no man in his presence, and speak evil of no one in his absence." If he had any difficulty in his mind respecting others, he considered it a sacred duty to apprise them of it. He would *not suffer sin upon his neighbor*. And the kindness, the lovely simplicity, and meekness of his heart enabled him to give reproof to the greatest advantage. No one, who had the honor of a man, could be offended. His uprightness and veracity were so uniform and remarkable, that all, who knew him, could, I doubt not, unite in saying,—*"he was an Israelite indeed, in whom was no guile."*

To an uncommon degree, *he had the government of his passions*. His was the happiness of ruling his own spirit. He attained such self command, that there is reason to doubt, whether he was angry the last twenty years of his life. The agitations and contentions of the world left his passions cool. He kept at a distance from the storm, and found a refuge in the calmness and gentleness of his own mind.

He was equally remarkable for *the government of the tongue*. The Apostle JAMES states this as one of the rarest and best marks of real goodness. "If any man offend not in word, the same is a perfect man."—Who ever heard that tongue, now silent in death, utter falsehood, profanity, reviling, or slander? That good man governed his speech by the meekness of wisdom. He seemed to have well considered the horrible effects of an unbridled tongue, "that unruly evil; that world of iniquity; that deadly poison; that fire, which sets the whole course of nature in a flame." Against these evils he watched and prayed, and endeavored to employ his tongue in harmless, kind, and profitable discourse.

He was a man of *prudence*. He exercised this virtue in the management of all his concerns, whether great or small. No man perhaps ever had less of that rashness, which flows from imagination without judgment, and from ardor without experience, and often renders the best plans abortive. To a good degree he possessed the power of discerning the feelings and characters of others, and of anticipating the consequences of different modes of action. He had a deep conviction that he was liable to err. This conviction induced a habit of the most cautious deliberation, and, on important sub-

jects, of being slow in forming his conclusions. His prudence led him to guard against extremes in religion. He loved the obvious, sober sense of Scripture. In matters of speculation, he chose the happy medium;—in matters of practice, *the plain path, the footsteps of the flock*. In short, he had that useful wisdom, which results from an honest and teachable mind and long acquaintance with the affairs of the world. This wisdom effectually preserved him from the mistakes of many celebrated geniusses, who never look into the details of human concerns, and enabled him successfully to execute his plans, without giving "offence either to Jew or Gentile."

He was eminently a *peace maker*. Few christians so fully comply with the apostle's direction; "If it be possible, as much as lieth in you, live peaceably with all men." When duty permitted, he was willing to give up his own rights, and *do any thing, or be any thing*, for the sake of peace.

He had a *quick sense of moral evil*, especially in himself. Judging of things, not by the standard of the world, but by the word of God, he perceived many feelings and actions to be sinful, which are commonly regarded as innocent. Wandering thoughts in religious duties, want of warm affections and of life in devotion, were his constant burden and grief, and made him long after heaven. Any small impropriety or error in managing his domestic concerns was quickly perceived, and as quickly acknowledged.

He was distinguished for a *simple respect to the will of God, as the rule of duty*. He sought seriously and

prayerfully, to know the will of God, that he might do it. And he obtained the promised direction. Rarely can a christian be found, to whom the path of duty is generally made so plain, as it was to him. In the most important transactions of his life, namely, those which related to the establishment of the THEOLOGICAL SEMINARY, his duty, as he often declared, was made as clear to his mind, as if it had been particularly pointed out to him by a voice from heaven. This entire satisfaction respecting the path of duty, which was perhaps the most distinguishing trait in his character, resulted, not from the greatness of his mental powers, not from the extent of his knowledge, nor, on the other hand, from any fanatical impression; but from that habit of calm deliberation, that single regard to the will of God, and that divine teaching, which afford the safest and best guidance.

Finally, he was remarkable for his *beneficence*. He had sincere compassion for the poor, and opened his hand in charity for their relief. With warm and steady affection, he endeavored to promote the welfare of civil society. For the instruction of children in every branch of useful knowledge, especially for their religious education, he was greatly concerned. This favored church and society know his exertions for this important object, and for their religious interest in other ways.\*

\* The following instances of his beneficence are selected as particularly worthy of being recorded.

- \$500 to the South church in Andover, for the benefit of the poor.
- 400 Bell to the South Parish in Andover.
- 650 Clock to do.
- 109 Flaggon to the South church in do.
- 50 Tankard to do.
- 130 Encyclopedia to the Library of Phillips Academy.
- 980 To the Society for promoting Christian Knowledge.

Many years ago he began to give assistance to young men of talents and hopeful piety, in their preparation for the ministry. But he had a largeness of heart, which, after all these acts of charity, was not filled. None of his plans of doing good satisfied him,—none corresponded with the extent of his benevolence, before he entertained the design of making *an establishment for the education and support of theological students*. This design he *often* declared, was first suggested to him by no man on earth; but by THE SPIRIT OF GOD. This he seriously and constantly believed; and this no christian can doubt. The nature and design of the SEMINARY exactly agreed with his feelings. Religious beneficence had become his grand object. To this he had consecrated much of the wealth, which God had given him. His strict economy and all his exertions to retain and increase his property were finally directed to the great design of doing good to the church of Christ. It was his own expression, "you can't tell how much pleasure I have taken in *saving for this object*." He did not labor to hoard up riches; nor did he use what he possessed for the purposes of luxury, pride, and grandeur. He did not live to himself; but labored to be *rich in good works*.—I have said, that *pious beneficence*, or using his substance for the promotion of religion, was his *character*. In this he showed that he knew the real value and proper use of riches. The method of

\$150 Subscription towards rebuilding the College at Princeton.

— To lengthen out the schools in the several districts in the South Parish in Andover for a number of years. It was a remarkable proof of his solicitude for the improvement of the rising generation, that he continued to visit all the schools in the parish twice a year till he was confined by sickness. Besides these acts of benevolence, he contributed to the education of several young men at Harvard College, and bestowed thousands of dollars in charities to ministers of the gospel, and to the poor in different places.



doing good which he adopted, that is, promoting the cause of religion, was, both in its nature, and in the extent of its fruits, superior to all others. He frequently mentioned it, as his end in what he had done for the SEMINARY, *to bring thousands and millions to glory.* This INSTITUTION was his favorite object; and its prosperity constituted much of his comfort in the concluding years of his life. For this INSTITUTION and all connected with it, he offered up daily prayer. In this centered his warmest affections. He connected it with his most solemn devotions, his purest pleasures, his best hopes of the church's prosperity. It was his deliberate and full persuasion, that he had done *well* in contributing to the establishment of such a SEMINARY;—that so great an object called for his *utmost exertions.* We have no doubt that he thinks so still, and that the Judgment day will confirm the persuasion.

I owe it to the memory of my *patron and friend*, to declare, that I have considered it one of the most precious privileges of my life, to enjoy his paternal affection, and to be near him in his feeble and languishing state. The observations, therefore, which I have made, and those which I am about to make, are not founded on vague report, but derived from the most intimate personal acquaintance.

Although he manifested seriousness and piety at an early period of life, there is reason to believe that for several of his last years, his religion became more deep and operative, and his enjoyments more constant and spiritual. He evidently grew in grace and in the knowledge of Christ. Accordingly he had an increasing conviction of the truth and importance of those evangelical doctrines, for the propagation of which he

did so much toward laying the foundation of this SEMINARY. But it seems proper to observe, that his belief of those doctrines was not produced by abstract reasoning, but was rather *the result of moral feeling, and of childlike submission to the authority of God in his word.* In this way his faith became altogether *practical*, and was at the same time *an act of piety.* But it was not on this account less *rational* or *sure.* In fact, it rested on the proper ground—faith, as it relates to the things of the Spirit of God, always partaking much more of *affection*, than of *intellect.* His belief of the truths of revelation was fixed and invariable. Whatever doubts he might sometimes have respecting his own religion; he had none respecting the doctrines of the gospel, particularly those, which relate to the way of salvation by Christ.

His unwavering and cordial belief of those doctrines was the foundation of his religious character, and of his supports and enjoyments in sickness. My hearers, I wish you could fully know the tenderness and tranquility of his mind during the last six months. Confined to his house,—then to his chamber, and with a very feeble and sometimes distressed bodily state, he found the peace, which the world cannot give,—the peace of God, which passeth all understanding.—Self-righteousness he utterly renounced. He had nothing which he looked upon, as in any degree the ground of acceptance with God. All his benevolent and useful deeds he counted loss for the excellency of the knowledge of Christ. With the most lively sensations, and sometimes with weeping, he expressed his entire reliance on the mere mercy of God. He saw no other foundation. He desired no other.

He felt more and more satisfied, that in his religious charity he had been directed by the Spirit of God, and had done what he should rejoice in forever; and frequently expressed a pleasing hope, that his beloved SEMINARY would become far more extensively useful, than he at first conceived;—that it would be the means not only of doing good to the churches in this country, but of spreading the gospel among distant heathen nations. Often when contemplating the INSTITUTION in this light did he turn his thoughts upon himself, and say, with every token of humility and tenderness,—“I am astonished, that God should make use of such a poor creature, as I am, to do *this great thing*.”

In the chamber of sickness, frequent prayer was his delight and refreshment. He seemed more and more perfectly to resign himself to the will of his Father in heaven. He was tired of sin; though not tired of living in God’s world; nor was he tired of laboring and suffering for God. “I desire to live,” he often said, “if God has any thing more for me to *do* or to *suffer*.” The time and manner of his decease he was satisfied to leave entirely with God.—His cheerful patience, meekness, and resignation, together with the uniform and regular exercise of his reason, rendered his sickness very edifying to his christian friends.

When he came near to his home, he showed increasing desires after God, saying repeatedly—“there is enough in God;—I want nothing but God.” Just before his speech failed, he was asked, whether he could say,—“whom have I in heaven but thee? and there is none on earth I desire beside thee;”—“Yes,”—he answered very feelingly,—“*with all my heart, and with all my soul, and with all my mind*.” At times he felt a joy,

almost too extatic for his feeble body to sustain, at the thought of being forever with the Lord, and seeing him face to face.

Such was our dear friend in health and in sickness. Most of my audience knew him, and can testify that he was indeed *a faithful servant of God*.

But he now rests from his labors. He has taken leave of his dear relatives and friends,—of his beloved Institution,—of this church and society,—and of this vale of tears. You mourn the death of an Israelite indeed,—who loved you and did you good,—who delighted in coming with you to this house of worship, and to this table of Communion. You will see his face no more. But he has left among you that good name, which is better than rubies. We hope this church and society will long reap the fruits of his goodness. Yea, we hope these fruits will extend to the churches in this land, and to distant nations, down to the end of time.

With the mourning Widow the hearts of many most tenderly sympathize. In the midst of her grief we trust she will not forget to bless God that, *more than fifty years*, she enjoyed a most affectionate consort; one, who was an example of conjugal love and tenderness. May she be enabled to glorify God by pious resignation; and by continuing to walk in the steps of her inestimable friend, now sleeping in death. May her heart be cheered by the hope of meeting him in heaven, and uniting with him in the service and enjoyment of God to all eternity. While she remains in this world of sorrow may the God of all grace and comfort grant her his presence.—May her bereaved son, now called to mourn the death of a kind father, hear the

voice of God in this event. Under every visitation, may he and his family be graciously supported. And may the fruit of affliction be, to raise their affections to those things which are above, and to secure to them the durable consolations of religion.—May these consolations be granted to the surviving sister; and may the affecting scene, through which she has passed, while attending upon a languishing brother, aid her in her preparation for a like peaceful and happy death.

The numerous relatives are called to a solemn self-inquiry and fervent prayer. May they mourn after a godly sort; and never forget the precious legacy, which their deceased friend has left them in his *pious example*.

This dispensation of providence imposes a sacred duty on all, who are connected with this SEMINARY,—the surviving Founders, and Visitors, the Trustees, Professors, and Students. We ought to humble ourselves under the mighty hand of God;—to search our hearts and try our ways. We ought to praise the God of heaven for raising up such a benefactor,—such a distinguished pattern of christian beneficence,—such an instrument of good to Zion. Above all, we ought to consider and fix in our minds, what was his object in his benefactions to this SEMINARY, and in what manner he has directed us to pursue that object.—The death of this beloved, generous, useful man ought to be a new excitement to a faithful discharge of all our duties relative to this Sacred INSTITUTION.—If we forget his great object, disregard his directions, and misapply his charity;—if we forget his love of union and peace, and the example he has left us of condescension, meekness, and forbearance;—if we do *this*, we shall be guilty of trampling his honor in the dust. If we do *this*, how

can we meet him at the Judgment seat of Christ? And how can we answer it to that God, who gave him wealth, and taught him how to use it?

My respected audience,

A *man of God* has been among you, and by divine grace shown you, how to use this world, how to live, and how to die.—I beseech you, dear friends, by his kindness to you and your children; by his many exertions, sacrifices, and prayers for your religious prosperity; by the uprightness, piety, and usefulness of his life; by his meekness and quietness, his hope and comfort in sickness; and by the blessed rest, which we have reason to think he now enjoys in God;—I beseech you by the solemnities of THE LAST DAY, when that dear but corruptible body shall put on incorruption; and that mortal, immortality; and when the voice of the Archangel shall reach all your graves, and summon you to Judgment;—finally, I beseech you by the meeting you must all certainly have with your departed friend before the tribunal of Christ;—by all these affecting considerations, I do earnestly beseech you,—remember the character of that godly man; make a thankful and pious use of his bounties; and diligently walk in his steps;—above all, follow the example and seek the glory of *his LORD, his SAVIOR* and everlasting FRIEND. Amen.

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